Draft Gold Coast Ocean Beaches Strategy

2013-2023
Contents

Foreword .............................................................................. 2
Strategy background ............................................................ 4
Purpose of this document ................................................. 5
Strategic alignment ............................................................ 6
Current trends and issues................................................... 7
Strategic outcomes and key actions

1. Everyone can enjoy a beach experience ...................... 12
2. Our beaches are healthy and clean .............................. 14
3. Our coastal infrastructure is protected from storm surge and erosion ...................................... 16
4. There is joint stewardship of the ocean beaches........ 18
Overview of key actions to achieve the strategic outcomes ....................................................... 20

“Gold Coast beaches need to be maintained, protected and where necessary, enhanced to ensure future generations are able to enjoy them.”
Foreword

Our ocean beaches support a significant component of the regional economy and have earned the city an enviable reputation as a premier tourist destination and the best place to live. The extent of beachfront development is a testament to the value of our ocean beaches.

The environmental, social and economic benefits and services provided by our ocean beach areas highlights coastal management as a serious and important issue for the Commonwealth, Queensland State Government, Council and the Community.

The Gold Coast Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023 seeks to ensure the following:

- everyone can enjoy a beach experience
- our beaches are healthy and clean
- our coastal infrastructure is protected from storm surge and erosion
- there is joint stewardship of our ocean beaches.

Our Ocean Beaches Strategy highlights our ongoing and increasing commitment to managing and protecting Gold Coast beaches now and into the future. A significant portion of our urban fabric and economy is exposed to the high energy ocean environment. Competing uses, the protection of the environment, pressure to privatise public space, loss of amenity and increasing demand for public access are key challenges.

Our Ocean Beaches Strategy consolidates a framework to maximise current and future use, access to and enjoyment of our beaches by all users. It directs resources in the most appropriate manner to protect and improve the integrity of natural and man-made coastal elements.

This strategy has been developed in light of community feedback. Ongoing consultation about our beaches is critical to ensure there is strong community spirit.

Coastal management is important for our business and community sectors, Council and other levels of government. With help from our key stakeholders, our Ocean Beaches Strategy builds on existing activities, plans and projects so our ocean beaches remain a centrepiece of this vibrant, global city.
Strategy background

The city’s ocean beaches extend more than 52 kilometres from Point Danger in the south to Jumpinpin at the northern end of South Stradbroke Island. There has been a consistently high rate of population growth over a long period, with similar trends forecasted. As more people move to the city and tourism continues to grow, there are more people using the beach along our finite coastline. It is becoming more important to carefully manage the dynamic ocean beach environment and ensure sufficient services are in place to meet community expectations.

Council has been at the forefront of coastal management since the 1960s. The technology and techniques for coastal management pioneered on the Gold Coast have benefited other coastal communities around the world. Council provides services, including beach sweeping, beach cleaning and beach maintenance. Council also employs the largest professional Lifeguard Service in Australia and in partnership with volunteers from Surf Lifesaving Clubs, this highly experienced team are the eyes and ears of the beach.

As the city’s population grows and diversifies, the way we use the ocean beaches is also changing. It is critical that we find ways to work together with all levels of government and the community to meet the challenges of managing, supporting and funding these world-class iconic beaches so they will continue to be here for us to enjoy into the future.

Purpose of this document

The Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023 outlines the preferred approach to managing ocean beaches so that we continue to enjoy the benefits beaches provide. This strategy provides guidance for future funding decisions that will deliver clean, healthy, safe and accessible beaches to the Gold Coast.

Community engagement

Previous community engagement revealed that the beach is the most valued component of the local lifestyle, especially its contribution to recreational and outdoor activities. The community perceives the beaches to be of high quality (Bold Future Project 2008) and the community has a vested interest in the strategic management of the ocean beaches.

This strategy builds on the feedback received from the community and future engagement will be undertaken on strategy actions directly affecting the community.
**Strategic alignment**

The Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023 is related to a number of current Council strategies, plans and visionary documents. It will also inform the development of future plans and strategies. Some of these are outlined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy/Plan</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Strategy</td>
<td>Both strategies have objectives around city liveability, economic value of beaches and surf breaks and supporting major/special events on beaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Strategy</td>
<td>The Transport Strategy will address timing and location of transport infrastructure, including getting to and parking at beaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks, Recreation &amp; Open Space Strategy</td>
<td>Understanding recreational and commercial use of beaches, parks and open space is required to inform long-term planning and investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watercycle Management Strategy (under development)</td>
<td>The Watercycle Management Strategy seeks to ensure that stormwater discharge into the ocean/waterways is of high quality. Ensuring that the ocean environment is clean and healthy to an adequate standard for recreational use is also a desired outcome of the Ocean Beaches Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change Strategy</td>
<td>Climate change risks include sea level rise and increased frequency and intensity of storm events. This has potential to affect the rate sand is moved and deposited onto beaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Flood Management Strategy</td>
<td>The beaches and dunes serve many purposes, including the fundamental purpose of protecting the coastline as the last line of defence against flooding from storm surge and/or sea level rise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Conservation Strategy</td>
<td>Both strategies identify that our beaches, dunes and coastal systems have substantial environmental values that need to be conserved for the benefit of the community now and into the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast Planning Scheme</td>
<td>The Planning Scheme guides growth and development in the city, including land use planning along the coastal strip. It incorporates State legislative coastal planning and policy requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast Shoreline Management Plan</td>
<td>The plan was developed to ensure we sustainably manage our sandy beach environment, which recommended coastal protection measures to deal with current erosion issues and forecasted effects of both natural trends and increasing weather variability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic alignment (continued)

Figure 1 – How the strategy fits within Council’s current strategy planning framework (see Strategic alignment table for more information).
### Current trends and issues

The Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023 addresses key trends and issues that face the city now and into the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Current trend or strategic issue</strong></th>
<th><strong>Implications/opportunities for Council</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active coastline management with built and natural infrastructure</td>
<td>Active management of the Gold Coast coastline has been occurring for many years. Coastal research and monitoring provides direction to ensure appropriate and effective coastal management and where necessary, allow for managed ecological and physical processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased erosion due to: • frequency and intensity of storms • sea level rise • weather variability</td>
<td>Increased coastal management support and funding is required to manage ocean beaches in the manner that balances variable weather patterns with adequate protection of people and property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex stakeholder responsibilities and interests in coastal management and decision-making</td>
<td>Capacity building, information sharing and establishing multi-agency forums and working arrangements is necessary to ensure stakeholder interests are considered. Seeking support and funding and striving to efficiently allocate existing resources will increase capacity for coastal management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing the ocean beaches environment</td>
<td>Further research and investigation will increase understanding of the ecological, social and economic values derived from ocean beaches to ensure appropriate management and protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing, changing population and use pressures</td>
<td>Understanding current demands for access to and use of the ocean beaches and the likely future demands (including possible changes in types of use due to changing city demographics) is required to ensure adequate facilities and services are available. Development pressures and increasing land values also contribute to demand and access to beaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our vision

Our beaches will be clean, healthy, safe and accessible now and into the future.

Our objectives

The key objectives of implementing the strategy are to:

- manage the physical risks and vulnerabilities to protect our ocean beaches and coastal infrastructure from storm surge and erosion
- commit to improving the aesthetic beauty, safety, accessibility, health and cleanliness of the beaches to meet community expectations
- coordinate stakeholder’s interests and support to meet the needs of the growing city and retain a balance of environmental, social and economic values of the beaches
- ensure ocean beach management funding priorities are informed by sound research and monitoring, stakeholder engagement and future demand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone can enjoy a beach experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our beaches are healthy and clean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our coastal infrastructure is protected from storm surge and erosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is joint stewardship of the ocean beaches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Everyone can enjoy a beach experience

With a growing, aging, and increasingly diverse population and finite amount of Gold Coast ocean beaches, it is important to manage our ocean beach environment so that everyone can enjoy a beach experience.

What does this mean for the community?

- **All abilities and backgrounds can enjoy a beach experience.** The beaches are open and accessible to everyone. Whether you are on foot, or on wheels, you will enjoy our wonderful beaches.
- **There are diverse options for getting to or along the beach.** Some people live within walking or cycling distance from the beach, others catch public transport or drive. We will cater for the different ways you arrive at the beach.
- **It is safe to swim at the beach.** With the largest professional lifeguard service and the help of Surf Lifesaving club volunteers, we help keep beaches safer.
- **To encourage a safe beach environment.** We will plan to balance different ocean beach activities to limit conflicting uses.
- **Residents and visitors can enjoy a beach experience by swimming, surfing, fishing, relaxing, attending events.**

What are our key actions?

1. **Investigate and assess the carrying capacity of beach and foreshore areas, including the compatibility of uses.** The Gold Coast has a growing population, with a wide variety of activities happening on the beach and in the ocean. Sometimes there are activities that people would like to do that are not compatible to occur at the same place and time. We will investigate how many people can safely get to and use the beach given the parking, public transport options, bikeways and footpaths. We will also look into the range of activities that people like to do at the beach and consider how to plan for and manage these so that everyone can continue to enjoy a beach experience.

1.2 **Prepare an annual report to evaluate the city’s overall progress on ocean beach management that surveys how everyone is enjoying beach experiences.** We will monitor and report on our progress to check residents and visitors of all abilities and backgrounds are able to enjoy a beach experience; it is a safe environment to swim, relax, walk, play at the beach; and there are different ways to get onto or near the beach.

1.3 **Develop a Commercial Activity Plan for Gold Coast beaches.** The Commercial Activity Plan will assist Council with decision-making about future commercial beach use. The plan will collate information, monitor impacts and provide guidance for considering new and renewed commercial activity on beaches. We will separately consult with community and business to guide the development of this plan.

1.4 **Investigate Oceanway priorities to inform timing and location in conjunction with the Transport Strategy.**

1.5 **Develop a Surf Management Plan for Gold Coast beaches.** The Surf Management Plan will recognise the importance of surfing to the City’s lifestyle and economy. The plan will be developed in consultation with the community, businesses and key interest groups. It will identify and prioritise surfing research, prioritise actions to improve surf etiquette and surf tourism, celebrate our surf economy and facilitate growth in surf related information, education, recreation, management and investment.

Performance measures for key actions:

- Number of facilities for all abilities available to provide a beach experience (viewing decks, benches, showers etc)
- Ratio of lifeguards/lifesavers to beach users
- Satisfaction with beach experience
View north Coolangatta
2. Our beaches are healthy and clean

Having clean and healthy beaches creates the correct conditions for flora and fauna to flourish and supports tourist and lifestyle values. The value of the natural environment is often underestimated and provides significant social and economic benefits in addition to beach ecological values. On the Gold Coast we are lucky to have naturally beautiful, white sandy beaches. The beach amenity is recognised nationally and internationally, attracting 11 million day visitors annually (Source: Tourism Research Australia 2012). Maintaining clean and healthy beaches is important to visitors and is core to why residents choose to live here.

What does this mean for the community?

- There is a balance of sand for walking, playing and relaxing. Achieving a balance between too little and too much sand.
- There are sand dunes with native vegetation reducing the risk of sand loss and providing animal habitat.
- Sand dunes are protected from negative human impacts such as people walking on them or becoming overgrown with weeds.
- The water is a high quality to swim in and for marine animals to thrive in.
- The sand is clean with no litter.
- There are long stretches of unadorned sandy beach. The beach is uncluttered with clear lines of sight.
- National and international tourists visit our world-class healthy and clean beaches.

What are our key actions?

2.1 Revise existing assessment method for quantifying volume of sand on beaches. In order to determine how much is a ‘healthy’ amount of sand on the beach we will look at the existing assessment method and determine a better way to measure and quantify how much is a ‘good’ amount of sand to have on the beach. This will help plan how we manage the amount of sand on the beach.

2.2 Prepare and annually update a Beach Health Report. We want to monitor and report on the health of beach. We will develop a report that includes performance measures that we can track to make sure that the sand, water and dunes are clean and healthy.

2.3 Identify sources of sand to nourish beaches and prepare a plan for accessing these reserves. During large storms, short-term beach erosion can occur as waves carry sand out to sea. Natural coastal processes can move sand along the beach so it builds up in some places and leaves other beaches without enough sand. We will identify sand reserves to place on (nourish) beaches that need more sand when required. We will develop a plan that looks at alternatives and affordability of different options to be more prepared for putting sand on the beach when it’s needed.

2.4 Benchmark reporting on the health of the city’s dunes. Dunes are a key part of healthy beaches and we fence and ensure there are plants on dunes, to keep them stable and in place. We will review the way we currently monitor and report on dune health and determine how, and to what level, we need to manage dunes.

Performance measures for key actions:

- Beach Volume Index meeting required standard
- Number of days non-compliance with water quality objectives
- Beach Health Report (to be developed)
- Percentage of tourists who visit the beach
3. Our coastal infrastructure is protected from storm surge and erosion

Increased weather variability, more frequent and intense storms and sea level rise is resulting in increased risk of erosion events and damage to property and infrastructure. There are different ways to manage erosion events with built infrastructure, including seawalls and artificial reefs providing stability for beach nourishment and vegetated dune systems. Active management of the coastline has been occurring and will continue to occur on the Gold Coast. Natural ecological and physical processes will be enhanced to assist with protecting infrastructure from the ocean.

What does this mean for the community?

- The beaches and dunes are managed to protect public and private property.
- The volume of sand on the beach provides a buffer from erosion and storm events.
- Dunes are wide and high enough to protect our city from the dynamic, high energy ocean.
- There is a rock seawall along urban sections of the coastline to protect infrastructure.
- New development will be set-back to allow for natural coastal processes.

What are our key actions?

3.1 Prioritise and implement recommendations from the Gold Coast Shoreline Management Plan for beach protection. In 2010, Council adopted the Gold Coast Shoreline Management Plan. The plan was developed to ensure we sustainably manage our sandy beach environment, which recommended coastal protection measures to deal with current erosion issues and forecasted effects of both natural trends and increasing weather variability.

3.2 Partner with relevant Federal and State Government agencies to ensure dredging programs contribute to improving the ability of Gold Coast beaches to withstand storm surge and beach erosion. Rivers and creeks on the Gold Coast are dredged to provide safe navigation for boats and to reduce the risk of flooding. As sand becomes available from dredging it can be placed on beaches that need more sand to protect them during storms and reduce beach erosion. We will work with agencies involved in dredging activities to ensure, where possible, we can use dredged sand on our beaches.

3.3 Ensure that ocean beach considerations are adequately reflected in the Council Planning Scheme through the review of codes, domains and maps to improve outcomes for the ocean beaches.

Performance measures for key actions:

- Percentage of public urban land on the coastline that has adequate protection
- Dollar value of damage to coastal infrastructure as a percentage of overall value of infrastructure
- Percentage of dunes vegetated/maintained

Erosion at Narrowneck Beach, looking south (1996)  
A ‘healthy’ Narrowneck Beach, looking south (2011)
4. There is joint stewardship of the ocean beaches

Gold Coast ocean beaches are enjoyed by, and provide benefits to many people. Individuals, businesses and governments benefit either directly or indirectly from the sandy beaches. It is important we work together to ensure that the effort required to maintain the benefits is equitably distributed.

What does this mean for the community?

- **Everyone understands the benefits** of having clean, healthy, safe and accessible beaches.
- **Investment decisions in ocean beach management** are determined by the costs and benefits of having clean, healthy, safe and accessible beaches.
- **There is equitable investment** in beach management from different levels of government and those who benefit from having clean, healthy, safe and accessible beaches.
- **Research and community engagement activities inform balanced decision-making** and recognises environmental, social and economic values.
- **Stakeholders groups are informed** and actively participate in actions to manage ocean beaches.

**What are our key actions?**

4.1 **Assume a leadership role and actively participate in regional and national coastal management organisations and peak bodies.** We need to influence policy outcomes that are beneficial to the management, use and preservation of the city’s ocean beaches.

4.2 **Establish forums and mechanisms to enable other levels of government and key stakeholder groups to be invested in coastal management on the Gold Coast.** We will develop ways to work together so that there is joint understanding of the issues, choices and cost of managing the ocean beaches. This will involve looking for different ways to equitably fund the investment required in our ocean beaches.

4.3 **Form partnerships to further research the environmental, social and economic values of the city’s ocean beaches, to inform coastal management planning activities and ensure infrastructure meets the demands of beach users.**

4.4 **Consolidate research and information** on ocean beach-related issues across our region and ensure accessibility to Council, key stakeholders and the wider community.

4.5 **Work with individuals and public and private sector organisations** to promote the city’s ocean beaches and recognise important environmental, social and economic values.

4.6 **Support and promote the coastal community education program** through a range of public and private sector activities.

**Performance measures for key actions:**

- Dollars contributed to ocean beach management by other levels of government
- Percentage of (major) ocean beach investment decisions that are informed by community engagement activities
Have your say

**Why is community engagement important?**

Our Draft Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023 will guide how we protect, enhance and fund the management of our beaches over the next 10 years.

It is anticipated that this strategy will influence how we enjoy our beach experience, the health and cleanliness of our beaches, how coastal infrastructure plays an important role in protecting our beaches from erosion and how our beaches are managed through partnerships.

We all have an interest in these outcomes and we particularly want the community to have their say on the future of the city’s ocean beaches.

**Tell as what you think**


Call us on **1300 694 222**

Write to us at haveyoursay@goldcoast.qld.gov.au or Ocean Beaches Strategy, PO Box 5042, Gold Coast Mail Centre Qld 9729.

Visit us at our beach shacks in April 2013.

### Overview of key actions to achieve strategic outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic outcome</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Everyone can enjoy a beach experience</strong></td>
<td>A, HRLS, P&amp;R, CT</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Investigate and assess the carrying capacity of beach and foreshore areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Prepare an annual report to evaluate the city's overall progress on ocean</td>
<td>A, SD&amp;CS, HRLS, CPP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Develop a Commercial Activity Plan for Gold Coast beaches.</td>
<td>HRLS, A, ED, P&amp;R</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Investigate Oceanway priorities to inform timing and location.</td>
<td>HRLS, A, ED</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Develop a Surf Management Plan for Gold Coast beaches.</td>
<td>A, ED, key interest</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Our beaches are healthy and clean</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Revise existing assessment method for quantifying volume of sand on beaches.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.2 Prepare and annually update a Beach Health Report.</td>
<td>A, CPP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Identify sources of sand to nourish beaches and prepare a plan for accessing</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>these reserves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.4 Benchmark reporting on the health of the city's dunes.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Our coastal infrastructure is protected from storm surge and erosion</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Prioritise and implement recommendations from the Gold Coast Shoreline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Management Plan for beach protection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Partner with relevant State Government agencies to ensure dredging programs</td>
<td>A, State Government</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribute to improving the ability of Gold Coast beaches to withstand storm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>surge and beach erosion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Ensure that ocean beach considerations are adequately reflected in the Council</td>
<td>CP, A</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Scheme.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. There is joint stewardship of the ocean beaches</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Assume a leadership role and actively participate in regional and national</td>
<td>A, CP, PAO</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coastal management organisations and peak bodies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Establish forums and mechanisms to enable other levels of government and key</td>
<td>A, ED, PAO</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>stakeholders groups to be invested in coastal management on the Gold Coast.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.3 Form partnerships to further research the environmental, social and economic</td>
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<td>2013-2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>values of the city's ocean beaches.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 Consolidate research and information on ocean beach-related issues across our</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>region.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 Work with individuals and public and private sector organisations to promote</td>
<td>ED, A</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>the city's ocean beaches.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Support and promote a coastal community education program.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2013-2023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**
- CPP – Corporate Planning and Performance
- HRLS – Health Regulatory and Lifeguard Services Branch
- P&R – Parks and Recreational Services Branch
- A – Assets Branch
- CT – City Transport Branch
- ED – Economic Development Branch
- CP – City Planning Branch
- SD&CS – Social Development and Community Safety
- PAO – Principal Advocacy Officer